

Reminiscences of



M. L. Wacha

D. E. WACHA.

REMINISCENCES OF

the late Hon Mr. G. K. Gokhale



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Gokhale

*Heroic heart ! lost hope of all our days !
Need'st thou the homage of our love or praise ?
Lo ! let the mournful millions round thy pyre
Kindle their souls with consecrated fire
Caught from the brave torch fallen from thy hand,
To succour and to serve our stricken land,
And in a daily worship taught by thee,
Upbuild the temple of her Unity.*

Sarojini Naidu

Hyderabad (Deccan) 1915.



Prof. G K Gokhale

Born, 9th May, 1856.

Died, 19th Feb. 1915.

traits of his active life. The brochure is in no sense a biography of Mr. Gokhale and lays no claim to pronounce any verdict on his public career which, as I have already stated, must be left to posterity.

D. E. WACHA.

15th September 1915.

An incident or anecdote at a friendly dinner or private interview would be garnered and remembered. It might have some bearing on a public question which that statesman had propounded in the House of Commons or on some public platform or at a railway station or at some other well-known places. A systematic collection of a variety of utterances of this nature might prove most useful, if undertaken. But it is doubtful, whether such an attempt has been made. In these days of high pressure, when the most momentous news or events of to-day are rapidly superseded by those of to-morrow, and when what is said at this hour is forgotten at the next, it may be deemed of doubtful utility to compile a systematic collection of reminiscence, of a well-known politician, statesman or publicist. The materialism of humanity in this age of stress and strain forbids such a stupendous task. Even with the legion of daily newspapers and

periodicals which register a thousand events of a variety of character, important and unimportant, happening every day, and specially the utterances of public men, it is most doubtful whether a compiler of these could accomplish a work of this character with success. Ours is not an age of learned leisure and of patient scholarship. It is not the age of Addison and Swift, of Johnson and his Boswell. It is out of the question that men of the type of Boswell could flourish now or be tolerated. No doubt he is still considered the prince of biographers, or as "Peter Pindar" humorously called him, "a mighty shark of anecdote and fame." But who in these days would take upon himself the self-imposed task of "a lively bouncing cracker" at the tail of some "literary whale" of great celebrity? The conditions of active public life in the ages of Queen Anne and Good Queen Victoria are not the conditions in the age of King

George V. Judging from the past history of a century, or a century and half ago, it would not be rash to venture the statement that each generation has its own ideals as to its public men, what they should say and do, and what may be those reminiscences and recollections which should be narrated for popular enlightenment or popular instruction. Lastly, after all, when everything is said and written about recollections and reminiscences, what may be the ultimate residuum? What may be the quantity of the golden grain gleaned from the chaff? Precious little, to be sure. So that I am of opinion that after all this kind of recollections should be deemed as ephemeral. They will have their little day and cease to be.

I am at a loss, therefore, under the circumstances, what personal recollections I may give of my late friend which would interest and instruct the readers of *The*

Elphinstonian who have been so solicitous about them. I am afraid there is little to be recalled as far as I am personally concerned. And there are two special reasons which I cannot help urging on this account. Firstly, I was the senior of Mr. Gokhale by 22 years. We were never, therefore, either school or college contemporaries. Secondly, I have been all my life a denizen of Bombay, whereas Mr. Gokhale might well be deemed a citizen of Poona for the first ten years of his public life, and a citizen of India for the next fifteen years. No doubt during the twenty-four years that I knew him, say from 1890, he off and on came into close contact with me in respect of public affairs only. We were not together on any other plane or platform, our avocations necessarily obliging us to move in different orbits. I have been all through a man of business. He was first a Professor in the Fergusson College, though educated at Elphinstone

College, and after 1902 a regular professional politician. I do not mean to convey the vulgar impression of that entity. By no means was Mr. Gokhale, one who pursued politics for the sake of earning a livelihood as the lawyer, the physician, the engineer, the banker, or the stockbroker does. No. He pursued politics for its own sake but with a double purpose, of a most laudable character. In the first place he keenly loved politics for its own sake. And secondly there was the patriotic desire in him to advance the political progress of his countrymen by political activity on many a platform and Council Chamber. His love of history was unextinguishable, being himself a Professor of History. History, as Elphinstonianus should know, and as Mr. Freeman has postulated, is past politics. The more Mr. Gokhale read and imbibed the lessons of History or past politics the more eager he was to know of politics in the present

tense. It is superfluous at this time of day to observe what is acknowledged as a great truth by the learned world of civilization that the study of History is a *sine qua non* for pursuing with some profit to himself and his country the vocation of a citizen. Any day a student well read in history and properly understanding it, makes a better citizen than he who has not that knowledge. Nothing so broadens the mental horizon in politics as History. The angle of vision is greatly enlarged. Parochial views of men and things are superseded by catholic views. The parish is forgotten and all the world becomes his country. Nothing, therefore, is more valuable than History and no accomplishment is more suited to him who aims at being a better citizen than the same subject. But it requires to be read in its true light. Its interpreters themselves must be citizens of the world, capable of taking a broad survey of our humanity

and able to point to the lessons which past empires and past potentates and statesmen, philosophers, social and religious reformers, capitalists and industrialists, agriculturists and labourers have taught. Modern historians of the past half-century have entirely changed the old, narrow, orthodox method of treating History. This will be readily perceived by comparing a treatise on history on the old lines and one that treats on the latest lines, a history which takes due cognizance of archæology, of state records, of muniments of a variety of kinds, from the papyri of Egypt and cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria, Babylonia and Persia, to the modern records, inclusive of contemporary chronicles such as newspapers, periodicals, parliamentary journals and so on. But it is superfluous to dilate more on the right method of teaching and learning History in the modern acceptation of the term.

It is by a broad study of History in its

several aspects just indicated that Mr. Gokhale equipped himself when he launched into active public life. If in the latter days, after his entry into the Viceregal Legislative Council, he was recognized as a cultured politician, it was entirely owing to his previous equipment of historical study. What were the forms of Government in the times of the Greeks and the Romans, what in the feudal ages, and what in mediæval and modern times were well grasped by his mind, always so clear. He was, therefore, so far ahead of many of those Indian friends with whom he sat in Council from time to time that he overtopped them all. It did not occur to him when he donned the toga of the Professor at the Fergusson College, to study for the law. Had he done so there is little doubt he might have broadened his historical vision even to a large degree than he actually did. The constitution of the Greek City States and Democracy and

the Roman Republic, and the later laws of the Emperor Justinian are in themselves most interesting and instructive studies, apart from the laws of Europe of later date than the mediæval, which have for their basic foundation the old Roman law, and lastly the constitution of Great Britain and the United States. That is the difference, then, between the cultured politician, full of such studies, and the Member of the Legislative Council who is innocent of them. In this respect, Mr. Gokhale was not so fortunate as the late Messrs. Ranade and Telang and Sir Pherozeshah M. Mehta who has been such a towering Indian personality in every Legislative Council that he has sat and adorned. But this apart, we must take Mr. Gokhale as we found him.

Mr. Gokhale while a Professor was also a self-instructed post-graduate. His private reading was extensive. Next to History he had made himself proficient in

Economics, the spark of which was no doubt kindled in him first by the genius of that great teacher and his special *guru* Mr. M. G. Ranade, and later on by the solid Mr. G. V. Joshi of Sholapur. Mr. Gokhale had a great capacity for assimilating facts, and knowledge derived from such men and his clear mind and natural talents enabled him to easily grasp such facts and knowledge and reproduce them for the consumption of those whom he addressed. Practical politics necessarily drew him into the vortex of Indian finance of which he acquired no little mastery as year after year the budget came to be critically commented on by him. Here statistics came to be fairly studied in conjunction with economics. An indefatigable worker as he was, he had made it a point, when speaking on financial questions, to thoroughly prepare himself beforehand. Sensitive as he was to any adverse criticism from the bureaucracy.

members of the Financial Department, he took infinite pains to coach himself so that he might not be tripped up. But this previous preparation was no light work. It meant references backward and forward, precedents here and there, precedents in the House of Commons and precedents in the Imperial Legislative Council. Those alone who, like Mr. Gokhale, have conscientiously studied Indian finances for purposes of honest and disinterested criticism in and out of the Council, can form an adequate idea of the preparation required.

At the same time it should be observed that in matters of currency and banking Mr. Gokhale suffered by reason of his want of practical experience. His contributions on these subjects to the debates in the Imperial Council were less illuminating and useful. Under the circumstances the criticism was more academic

than influential for practical purposes. The principal trait of Mr. Gokhale's career in the Council was his thoroughness, apart from his scholarly English and lucidity of thought which were greatly enhanced by his fluent delivery. He was determined that what he said or urged should be based on well-digested and reliable facts. His deductions from such facts may sometimes be imperfect or even erroneous. All the same the facts themselves could hardly be challenged. And so far as my knowledge extends they never were challenged. But he had an admirable knack of marshalling his facts in logical sequence. Of sophistry there was to be noticed but little. His utterances in the Council were neither ornate nor perfervid in their eloquence. Eloquence he possessed, but it was of a homely character. He was no orator. Orators, like poets, are born. Thus it was that though Mr. Gokhale's salient points in a speech in the Council,

Chamber would create a deep impression, they were not such as would carry his colleagues with him. The principal aim and object of an orator is to persuade and electrify his audience, and carry them with him in gaining a point. Again, by experience Mr. Gokhale had greatly trained himself to restraint when speaking in the Council. This arose from his being fully alive to his responsibility as a Councillor. There never was any license in the liberty of his speech. He well understood the advantage of previously well-thought-out and well-arranged speeches.

No reference need be made to the matter and manner of Mr. Gokhale's speeches in public. They were of fair average standard though he would sometimes rise to the height of the occasion when demanded. But all his speeches were pervaded by a great sobriety of thought and language. He was a popular representative but not a demagogue. He

was conscious of the importance and the weight which those in power and place would attach to his utterances. Every word was weighed and equipoised. Of course, all those speeches in the Council were not impromptu, though on a platform other than the Council, he often spoke extempore. Most, if not all, the speeches of importance he made at the Council were exceedingly cautious. He refrained from using language which might be deemed intemperate or offensive. But with all these good qualities, it must be remarked in the interest of truth that he was exceedingly sensitive to criticism. In his own special and narrow circle it seemed at times as if he played the part of Sir Oracle. Indeed, latterly, as he grew in reputation, this spirit of impatience and intolerance of criticism became more marked. He would resent any criticism of his dogmas and *ipse dixit*, and would sometimes fly into a kind of, passionate

hysteria. That was a failing which, it was feared by his closer circle of friends, might be accentuated as he grew older. It was the infirmity of a great mind, and not uncommon. This was to be discerned at its fullest at meetings of the Subjects Committee of the Indian National Congress when controversial topics came on for free discussion. He would vainly try to force his own opinion on those who with equal conviction differed from him. When the heat and excitement were over and a calmer atmosphere prevailed he would see the error of his ways and frankly acknowledge it. It was once humorously remarked by a friend who is fully aware of this failing that in this respect Mr. Gokhale was a greater despot than the bureaucrat whom he would criticize for entertaining dogmatic opinions and growing impatient of outside criticism. But all this is human nature. Each of us is born with his own verities. We are prone

to detect the beam in the eyes of another while oblivious of the mote in our own. In his *Essay on Criticism* Pope has well observed that

“ ’Tis with our judgments as our
 watches ; none

Go just alike, yet each believes his
 own ”

In the field of politics, as in the field of commerce and industry, of education and social reform, what is greatly needed is a well-balanced mind. The value of such a mind is best seen when a leader has to steer his bark through a grave political crisis. To give the right counsel and to suggest the most practical solution of grave problems on which may depend for years to come the welfare of a people are qualifications which differentiate the mere ordinary politician from the statesman. In the case of Mr. Gokhale it

would be idle to deny that differences of opinion had greatly prevailed on this important point. The too ardent love of hero-worship, had so far blinded one set of his friends as to make them incapable of detecting certain mental weaknesses in him. There was another set of friends, free from all prejudice, yet appreciative enough, who were not backward in recognising that instinct of political sagacity which constitutes a claim to true statesmanship. There was yet a third set who were of opinion that left independently to himself and to his judgment he could never have made a safe and sagacious leader such as were Messrs. Ranade, Telang and Tyebji or Sir Pherozesha Mehta. However, we who are his contemporaries; are too near yet to form an unbiased and impartial judgment in this respect. We may best leave that to the verdict of posterity.

Meanwhile we may dwell on a few personal recollections. I first knew Mr Gokhale when he attended the second Bombay Congress in 1889. It was, however, a speaking acquaintance. I came to know him better in 1890 when he made a brief but terse speech on the income Tax, reintroduced by Lord Dufferin in 1886, on which all India was of one opinion, namely, that it should be repealed, the emergent necessity that had brought it into existence having passed away. That speech was made at the Calcutta Congress of 1890 at which Sir P. M. Mehta presided. He seemed to be then bubbling with enthusiasm and was greatly delighted to hear on all sides that his maiden speech was an earnest of what might be expected from him on the Congress platform as he grew older and better experienced. I came into still closer contact with him when he was Joint Secretary with Mr. Tilak of the

Poona Congress of 1895. But prior to that year I had marked his great enthusiasm while taking an active part, as a youth of 27, in the magnificent demonstration which Poona had organised for Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji, then M. P. for Central Finsbury, on the eve of his departure to Lahore to preside at the Congress which was to be held in that city for the first time. Full of youthful vigour and high ambition, he was only too eager to participate in doing honour to one whom he was, perhaps, to see for the first time in his life, and who was the acknowledged veteran leader of the entire political party of India. So eager and enthusiastic he was that I well remember how he wished to be a kind of personal aide-de-camp to the renowned President. There was no room in the carriage which drove Mr. Dadabhoy and me and two other distinguished Congressmen to Hirabag where the reception had been organized

by the enthusiastic citizens of Poona. At last we gratified his desire by putting him on the coach-box. I have vivid recollection of the glee and brightness of his countenance as he joyously took his seat there. It was the glee of gratification at the fact that at last he had been able to satisfy his ardent youthful desire to serve Mr. Dadabhoy.

To him it was a red-letter day in his nascent political career. And I also recollect how all along the route he joined heartily in the loud cheers and hurrahs of the people, often waving his white handkerchief as if to stimulate them. Little must have that young man dreamt of a hearty and enthusiastic cheering for himself twelve years later when, having won his Congress laurels, he drove through the town of Benares as the President-elect of the Congress held there. That was the proudest day of his life till then.

The political apprenticeship he served in the Congress cause naturally pointed him out as a fit and qualified representative of the Deccan for the purpose of giving evidence in 1897 before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure, generally known as the Welby Commission. Mr. M. G. Ranade could not go, neither Mr. G. V. Joshi. Both were in reality his *gurus*. But as the *gurus* could not go they selected Mr. Gokhale, their infant Gamaliel, to do the service needed for his part of the country. Mr. Ranade and other friends found his expenses. He had heavy briefs on Indian finance to study some months before his departure. Those briefs were, of course, specially prepared for him by the superior Gamaliels. He took excellent lessons at their feet with all the zeal of the new disciple. Mr. Gokhale had a laudable and burning ambition to shine in the political life of his country and he was keen on following.

in the footsteps of his masters and other leaders. Thus he went forth well-equipped to give his evidence before the Commission. The eyes of the entire Deccan were turned to him, and Mr. Gokhale was conscious of the fact. The evidence would be the test of his future utility as a rising young politician. And he strove his best to deserve his selection. Needless to say he excelled himself in the mission, on which he was sent, and it is no use referring to it. What is more to the purpose of my *Reminiscences* is to give here a few of the impressions created on me whilst we were living together at Cambridge Lodge near the East Putney Station, along with Mr. Dadabhoy.

In the first place he was exceedingly shy. That shyness was greatly enhanced by reason of his finding himself in strange company. To him it was wholly a new experience to live in an English home

with English ladies and gentlemen, and Parsecs. He was a Hindu, and though on board the mail-steamer he had seen something of cosmopolitan life and mixed with passengers of different races and creeds, he could not have realized till he had come to live with us what was domestic life in an English suburb. He moved warily for the first two days after his arrival. He had met with a serious accident at a waiting-room in Calais which had injured his heart. It pained him considerably, but such was his shyness and diffidence that he would not venture to speak about it to a single individual. But the two days' mute and patient suffering was too great to be borne without medical advice any further. That was a sure indication of his strength of enduring great moral sufferings in public life when he had to contend with attacks from political opponents on one side and social conservatives on the other. At last he

took courage and resolved to see me first. His reverence for Mr. Dadabhoy was so great that he felt he must keep himself at a respectful distance from him. Indeed, it is no exaggeration if I say that he viewed the Grand Old Man with reverential awe—a *rishi* who was to be adored from a distance. To his mind, still youthful and unused to the world, it would be profanity to approach Mr. Dadabhoy and be on familiar terms with him. That was his attitude, not unintelligible, for a young Hindu of 31 in the situation in which he had found himself on his first arrival in the great Babylon of modern civilization; for a Hindu, well-trained and disciplined in domestic reverence, his attitude was certainly correct. And he was quite correct in approaching and confiding to me the story of his sufferings and as to what I should do to relieve him from the bodily pain which had so tormented him for the first two days. As soon as

he had described the nature of the accident, I flew to Mr. Dadabhoy's room and asked him to send for a good doctor. Mr. Dadabhoy did so at once, and accompanied by me came into my room where Mr. Gokhale was sitting a very picture of mute and patient suffering. We assisted him to go to his room on the second floor—a kind of attic—and comforted him till the good doctor arrived. We explained the nature of the accident and he heard also all that Mr. Gokhale had to tell him. We then withdrew. The doctor examined his heart for over half an hour, prescribed the necessary medicine and gave directions for fomentation and so on. The doctor informed us how serious the accident was and how narrowly he had escaped immediate death! Our anxiety on his account was great for the next two or three days till progress towards recovery was assured. The progress was slow. He lay on his bed for some days, the

doctor having issued strict injunctions not to move out from the bed. He was pronounced convalescent after a fortnight. Luckily for him and for us we had in our house a highly polished lady, belonging to a family claiming lineage from the great Sheridan, exceedingly sympathetic and full of humanity. Mrs. Congreve, for that was her name, volunteered to be Mr. Gokhale's nurse. All through that illness it was she who nursed him. No sister could have nursed better. And none could have kept Mr. Gokhale so cheerful and bright all through that serious illness. In a way it was a fortuitous circumstance that the friendship of Mrs. Congreve dispelled to a considerable extent his shyness. So that by the time he was able to join us at the common breakfast and dinner table he had taken enough courage to talk freely, and yet with a certain amount of reservation arising from his own diffidence as to the correct way

in which he should behave. It was altogether a strange experience for a Hindu youth to live and move and dine in company with English ladies and gentlemen. At the table he sat nigh to Mr. Dadabhoy who took the greatest care of him and looked to all his comforts while I sat just opposite. Remembering some incident of a tea-party at Poona years before and all the fuss and criticism made thereon, combined with his own strict orthodoxy, I could plainly discern how punctilious Mr. Gokhale was in that strange company, never to forget that he was a Hindu who could not touch an egg or even smell a fish. His food consisted of bread, butter, vegetable soup and fruit. He would not touch even a spoonful of pudding for fear it might be made of eggs. And many indeed were my chaffing utterances on the constituents of the sweets. It was quite a picture to see him throwing down his fork and spoon and looking

grave and aghast while Mr. Dadabhoy would tell him not to mind me and my chaff. I was a confirmed chaffer so far. And every time he dropped his fork and spoon there was a hearty merriment among the rest of the company.

But before he left Cambridge Lodge he had got over his superstition and fears and by the time we were comfortably ensconced at the Hotel Victoria, a sister one to the Metropole, in Northumberland Avenue, about the middle of April 1897, Mr. Gokhale was getting over both his shyness and ultra-sensitiveness. That was a distinct gain. But here I may wander a little to relate a very agreeable incident. It happened that there was to be the great annual University Boat Race on the 31st March. When the subject of viewing it was first mooted by the ladies at the dinner table, Mr. Gokhale grew exceedingly bright and cheerful. He was

Some one or other had no doubt coached Mr. Gokhale in Poona, before he left for London, in the matter of behaving there. His manners and courtesies were over-punctilious. They would have done credit to the most polished Oriental at the Court of the Great Mogul of which we all have read so much. One thing in reference to the outward conventional courtesies I should not omit to mention here, since it sometimes carried him to the verge of the ridiculous. That was the taking off of the tall silk hat. It was a veritable fetish with him so much so that when we went to Dublin and I had my hat on while on the deck of the ferry which took us there, he tapped me gently on my shoulder, whispering "take off your hat." I burst into laughter at this over-sensitiveness in manners. Of course all this wore off in time, but here I am retailing Mr. Gokhale's first feelings, sentiments and manners before he was

three months in London. As he mixed more, conversed freely, and better understood the social usages and customs he knew exactly how to be "correct." But these little incidents show how great was Mr. Gokhale's solicitude to do naught which was incorrect or prone to reproof. His extreme desire was to leave behind him among those with whom he mixed the impression that he acted as a courteous, polished citizen of London would act. But his feeling of reverence and respect for the Great Ones was undiminished. He was bubbling with a desire to see some parliamentary and other celebrities. The writings of John Morley had greatly impressed him and he made it a point not to return to India without meeting him. A meeting was arranged and he went and saw the great philosophic radical and conversed freely about Burke and the Irish political question of the day. He returned home overjoyed like a grown

up school-boy who had gratified the inmost desire of his heart. If my memory serves me right he also saw Mr. John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Party, and tried to thoroughly understand all the points in dispute in reference to Home Rule. Thanks to the courtesy and kindness of Sir William Wedderburn, he saw other good friends of India. He went by invitation to an At Home of the Countess of Warwick and spoke for a few minutes on social questions and Indian female education. In short he was only too eager to make the best use of the limited time available to him in London to learn personally of men and things. In this way, I remember, he made himself acquainted with Mr. T. P. O'Connor whom we both met in the spacious hall of the National Liberal Club on the occasion of an evening entertainment in honour of Sir Vernon Harcourt who had then just returned to the Liberal fold after skulking

like Achilles in his tent for some time. In the midst of the fashionable gathering, oblivious of the gaiety around him, Mr. Gokhale stood conversing with Mr. O'Connor for well nigh 20 minutes. It was a fetish with Mr. Gokhale that on such important social functions, like afternoon and evening entertainments, to put on his Mahratta turban. The colour he had chosen was exceedingly attractive. It was a golden orange and I know for a fact how some ladies to whom we were introduced by our valued and esteemed friend, the late Mr. W. S. Caine, had a magnetic attraction for that turban. The more such ladies wished to see him wear that turban the greater was Mr. Gokhale's ecstasy. He used to go with me to Parliament House in the same head-dress which being singular in such a place, no doubt spotted out this brown man, and hereby hangs another amusing tale. At Cambridge Lodge we had for our Com-

pany a humorous English lady, Miss Payne, who was the land-lady. As Mrs. Congreve had proved such an efficient and sympathetic nurse to Mr. Gokhale during his illness, she christened him as "Mrs. Congreve's brown baby." When the christening was first announced at tea we all went into paroxysms of hearty laughter. Thus wherever the "Brown Baby" went in his gold coloured head-dress he used to attract great attention. It was so at the Imperial Institute in one of the halls of which we attended the Annual General Meeting of the Indian National Association under the able management of that esteemable lady, the late Miss. Manning. The amiable Lord Hobhouse presided and Mr. Gokhale had so far persuaded me that I too, for once, put on my Parsee turban. We both attracted attention and were honored with seats on the dais near the Chairman.

Continuing my narrative of Mr. Gokhale's

burning desire to see some distinguished persons, connected either with politics or education, I may observe that when on a visit to Oxford in company with our valued friend Mr. Caine, who all along while we stayed in England was our guide, philosopher and friend, Mr. Gokhale embraced the opportunity by pre-arrangement to see the late Sir William Hunter and to learn something about the advancement of Indian education in which he was ever interested. Such was his eagerness to know something more about English system of education, male and female, that once more under the guidance and with the help of the genial Mr. Caine we passed half a day of a most interesting and instructive character at Dulwich College. He was picking out the brains of the amiable Principal while at luncheon and putting question after question on the subject of instruction at that Institution. Then one day we spent some th

Gokhale to make an agreeable impression on those whom we met, specially Sir Charles Dilke. In fact he appeared to me like a well-behaved boy going out on travel bearing closely in memory all the minute parental instructions. Laërtes could not have behaved better after the sage Polonius had minutely coached him as to how he should conduct himself in France.

Another trait which, as he grew in public life, became conspicuous in him and which I carefully marked, was Mr. Gokhale's great impulsiveness, almost bordering on what we should call youthful impetuosity. The impulses in themselves were creditable and noble and emanated from an unsophisticated heart. Only sometimes they were blind, but excusable. He would seize an idea on the impulse of the moment and try to hug it till he found later on by experience that it was a wrong one. If in nine cases the

impulse was ingenuous in the tenth it was altogether wrong and ridiculous, leading him into embarrassment. This faculty greatly developed in him as he progressed. Indeed, I should say it became confirmed. At our inner circle, when we happened to meet together for the discussion of a burning question, we had to pull him up, and be it said to his credit he would soon correct himself though not without a preliminary struggle.

When the Congress was to be held at Poona during the Christmas of 1895, Mr. Gokhale being one of the Secretaries, I had now and again to visit that place in my capacity as the General Secretary of the Congress, to consider and settle such matters on which there appeared to be some difference of opinion. In fact, I often used to act as a kind of arbiter, so that all differences being smoothed the work of the Congress might progress unhindered. There were, however, per-

sonal differences : these made Mr. Gokhale very unhappy, and I was constantly being wired for to settle them. He was, as already said, very sensitive. And those from whom he differed used to tease and worry him and try his patience and temper to an abnormal degree. And he had a habit of acting on the impulse of the moment which sometimes was prejudicial not only to himself but to the interests of the Congress. And in order to hold him up to ridicule they once spread the rumour just a week or so before the opening of the Congress that some clique or other who had taken unkindly to him as the Secretary of the Congress were going to burn down the pandal! There may or may not have been any such design. It was impossible for me to investigate into the truth of the rumour. Mr. Gokhale telegraphed to me to go at once to Poona which I did. Immediately on reaching the station I repaired to the Congress pandal. My going

seems to have been heralded beforehand. So there was a fair congregation of the workers assembled there. They surrounded me and ironically asked why I should have taken all the trouble to go there as the rumour was absolutely baseless. Nobody was going to harm the Congress-marquéé. Ouly, Mr. Gokhale was an alarmist and he acted on the impulse of the moment. It was afterwards explained to me that there was some kind of intention widely reported, but that it could not be put into execution for various reasons. I relate this melodramatic incident to show how sometimes Mr. Gokhale acted on the spur of the moment without due consideration or reasoned patience.

I may also relate another instance of that impulsiveness which, however, distressed him and his friends for a time and over shadowed all the good that he had achieved in London. It is unnecessary to refer here to the plague incidents at

Poona and the letter which Mr. Gokhale wrote to the Manchester Guardian on the subject, which was eventually the theme of so much shrieking and howling by the Anglo-Indian Community. I remember very well how when together at the Hotel Victoria he used to read to me private letters from friends in Poona giving a harrowing and distressing account of the manner in which plague operations were carried on there. These accounts were written from personal knowledge and their truth could be certainly relied upon. Each mail brought more and more correspondence on the subject till Gokhale, with his peculiar temperament felt alarmed. The matter was whispered to friends and eventually at the close of June we met in one of the library rooms of Parliament House to consider the situation. I attended the first two meetings. At another meeting, when I was absent, it was resolved to send a letter to the

Manchester Guardian. As Gokhale lived separately from me at Clapham for the time and as the matter was deemed urgent he had no opportunity to shew me the letter which became the subject of so much unnecessary and unjustifiable vituperation afterwards and which caused him many an anxious day. No doubt the facts stated in the letter were believed by Mr. Gokhale to be absolutely true. They were written by friends in whom he had the greatest confidence. Only his own impulsiveness overcame him and the restraint with which it was necessary to give out such facts in the public was not sufficiently borne in mind. I need not further refer to the disagreeable episode and all that followed. But I do say most emphatically that Mr. Gokhale firmly believed in the correctness of the statements his friends had made in the correspondence. I left London for the Continent. Mr. Gokhale aban-

doned his intention to accompany me. He joined me on board the Caledonia at Brindisi on the 18th July 1897. What had happened in the interval I had not known as I had no opportunity to read the London papers but he gave me a very full and frank account of all that had passed and the storm of indignation with which he was overwhelmed. I found him very uneasy in mind all through the voyage. Despite all my friendly persuasion and advice, he was so unnerved and had become so absent minded, that he used to walk up and down the deck alone by himself with head stooped down, brooding all the while over the incident. But it was a great comfort that we had on board at least one Englishman, a member of the Bombay Civil Service, who greatly befriended him and who having heard a plain and unvarnished tale did his best, in company with myself, to soothe his nerves and bring to a state

of quietude his perturbed mind. He was indeed a good Samaritan, and to this day I honor that civilian for his manly courage, open mindedness and great consideration which saved poor Gokhale from many an indignity he was offered when on deck, specially from Aden, by some Anglo-Indian passengers who shall be nameless. The rest of the disagreeable episode, soon after his landing in Bombay is history and I studiously refrain from adverting to it. But one cannot overcome one's nature. That is all I can say.

Three months of the very best society of London parliamentarians and others in different places, encouraged Mr. Gokhale to fulfil his ardent ambition to distinguish himself in public life as Telang, Budrudin, Ranade and Pherozeshah had. It was a noble ambition, and his first visit to London gave him all the stimulus that was wanted in this direction to realize it. The kind spirit of

appreciation uniformly displayed by Sir William Wedderburn was greatly encouraging and helpful. Sir William was delighted with him from the first and it is a matter of rejoicing that till the last day of his life their mutual regard and esteem were unabated. From an acquaintance and a friend Mr. Gokhale became his confidant in London and none was so greatly helpful to him in introducing him to the Great Ones of the India Office, progressives and reactionaries alike.

At the Hotel Victoria, where Mr. Gokhale lived a while till he found a more congenial home with a dear Hindu friend at Clapham, I had very many opportunities to have long talks, after breakfast or dinner, with him. I found him to be a God-fearing person, a most loving husband, an affectionate and devoted parent, and a genial and entertaining companion of great culture. Often we would talk, about our domestic affairs and compare

notes, congratulating each other that we were so close on many a point. We were both home-loving persons. His heart was most tender and sometimes we both have dropped a tear at some tale of domestic grief or other event. In fact we lived like two brothers and that fraternity continued till his dying day, albeit that sometimes a word of advice from me made him uneasy for a time. But he knew I was disinterested and that the counsel was meant for his own greater good. With all his knowledge of men, Mr. Gokhale was at heart a simple man. He was not a shrewd judge of human nature, and he would often fall into the snares of the designing and the astute. There was no hypocrisy about him, refined or any other. His sincerity was beyond all doubt. And it was his sincerity and earnestness in all public and private affairs that made him so beloved of all his friends. All through his life he wore the white flower of a

blameless life and we are all the poorer for his premature loss.

It is not relevant to this article to say in conclusion aught about Mr. Gokhale's principal work during his long career of twelve years in the Imperial Legislative Council. It is writ large on the wall and he who runs may read. His greatest service to the country was in reference to the reform proposals of the Morley-Minto administration. Few are aware of the hard work he did in that matter in London in consultation with older men of experience including Sir Lawrence Jenkins and the signal ability with which he urged the claims of his countrymen for a wider and more popular basis of electoral reform than the one which has been actually conceded.

Outside the Council, but still part of his political career, were his labours in connexion with the Decentralization Commission as the principal non-Official Indian

witness of great ability and accurate knowledge and as the most prominent Indian member of the Public Services Commission. He had put his whole heart in this work which he conceived to be his *magnum opus* and the crowning edifice of his career as a politician. It is a matter of profound regret that for the sake of the country as well as for himself that work should have been left unfinished. But it is to be hoped that the fruits of his strenuous advocacy may still be discerned in the coming Report of the Commission. Mr. Gokhale's political career was unique in one respect, namely, that no Indian till now had carved out his career so exclusively and so disinterestedly. He gave all that was best in him to the service of the country in this branch. He entered whole-heartedly on his political campaign properly speaking from the time he entered the Vicerigal Legislative Council. To qualify himself for the rôle of

leader of the elected popular representatives he often went up and down the country. He left no province or presidency unvisited. He interviewed a variety of leaders holding a variety of opinions so as to clearly understand the position of each great, administrative problem on which he had to address the Council and base his criticism. That was the right and proper way to place the Indian view of matters before the governing authorities. The issues he raised were always clear and advocated with a grasp which must be admired. Not that it was perfect. All the same it was such as to command respect and attention. It is more than doubtful whether in years to come any able Indian of the requisite qualification will appear on the horizon to take up the identical work, that is to say, choose an exclusively political career to advance the political welfare of his countrymen. Not that there are wanting able

politicians of great experience and sound statemanship. There are many who could be pointed out. But more or less politics is with them only a matter of private leisure. The peculiar mournfulness of the great loss the country has sustained by the premature death of Mr. Gokhale lies in the fact that all his time and energy were wholly devoted to the consummation of the noble aim and object he had so near to his heart. In India there is yet to be found a learned leisured class who could wholly devote themselves to disinterested political work as Mr. Gokhale did. It is to be devoutly hoped that such a class may spring up in the fulness of time. Then alone the pulse of political life would beat so as to quicken that progress which Indians, imbued with the genuine patriotic spirit, yearn for and which alone is destined to bring about the happy evolution from the present period of transition, from the old order to the new.